(c) and (d) The scheme of VRS/VSS now proposed improves upon the existing arrangement having due regard to the views expressed.

(e) The details are being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Privatisation of Salem Steel Plant

*335. SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY : Will the MINISTER OF STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to privatise Salem Steel Plant;

(b) whether it could not be revived by waiving interest amount; and

(c) whether aspirations and interests of the workers and the people of Tamil Nadu have been taken into account while deciding to privatise it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) and (c) The financial and business restructuring package for Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) that has been approved by the Government includes, inter alia, conversion of Salem Steel Plant (SSP) into a joint venture, while protecting the jobs of existing employees.

(b) SSP has incurred a loss of Rs. 180 crores during 1998-99 and Rs. 122 crores during April—December, 1999. The interest burden was Rs. 123 crores during 1998-99 and Rs. 80 crores during April—December, 1999. As such even without consideration of interest, SSP has been incurring losses. Waiver of interest amount alone will not lead to revival of Salem Steel Plant.

Unemployment Problem in Urban Areas

*336. DR. M.N. DAS : Will the MINISTER OF URBAN EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the ever-growing problem of unemployment among the educated youth in urban areas;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to create job opportunities for the educated unemployed; and

(c) if so, what kind of employment prospects are being thought of ?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION (SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH DHINDSA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation deals with the urban poor educated upto 9th standard and living below the poverty line as defined from time to time.

Details of SWARNA JAYANTI SHAHARI ROJGAR YOJANA (SJSRY) are as under :—

Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY) has been launched with effect from 01-12-1997 by the Government on all India basis for the benefit of the urban poor. This programme seeks to provide gainful employment to the urban unemployed or under-employed poor through encouraging the setting up of self-employment ventures or provision of wage employment by utilising their labour for construction of socially and economically useful public assets. This programme targets the urban poor also read upto 9th standard and are living below the poverty line, as defined from time to time. The Ministry of Small Scale Industries deals with the scheme called Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) to cover all educated unemployed youth who are Class X passed or failed, ITI passed, and also persons who have undergone the government sponsored technical course for a minimum duration of 6 months.

Details of PMRY are given as under :—

The PMRY has been designed to provide employment to more than a million by setting up of 7 lakhs micro-enterprises by the educated unemployed youth. It relates to the setting up of the self-employment ventures through industry, service and business roots. The scheme also seeks to associate reputed Non-governmental Organisations in implementation of PMRY Scheme especially in the selection, training of entrepreneurs and preparation of project profiles. The Scheme covers all educated unemployed youth who are Class X passed or failed, ITI passed, and persons who have undergone the Government sponsored technical course for a minimum duration of 6 months. They should be within the age group of 18-35 years.

Preference is to be given to weaker sections including women. The scheme envisages 22.5% reservation for SC/ST and 27% for Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Patenting by American companies

†337. PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV :
SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK :

Will the MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) the items which have been got patented by American companies, so far;

(b) whether Government have registered any objection against the continuous patenting by American companies;

(c) if so, the reaction of those companies thereto; and

(d) the steps Government propose to take to protect all the Indian products, including bio-products, from American patent companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) to (d) Patents are granted under the sovereign prerogative of countries according to their respective patent laws and have territorial effect, that is, they are effective only in the country of grant. Any applicant (individual or company) is free to seek a patent in any country to protect and pursue its interests. Therefore, in the absence of specific details about the countries concerned, technology, name of company, etc., it is not possible to provide specific information as sought in part (a) of the question. However, as and when information is received about patents being obtained on certain items which are not considered patentable and which affect Indian interests, steps are taken to assess whether the grant of such patent can be challenged under the patent laws of the country concerned.

In order to protect bio-resources, the Patents (Second Amendment) Bill, 1999, contains provisions for mandatory disclosure of source and geographical origin of the biological material used in the invention while applying for patents in India. Provisions have also been incorporated to include the non-disclosure or wrongful disclosure of the same as grounds for opposition and for revocation of the patent, if granted. Provisions in this regard are contained in clauses 8, 17 and 28 of the said Bill.

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.